#2
MOONSTONE
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cover B
THE PHANTOM
GHOST WHO WALKS
LEONARDI
RENATO GUERRA
Mike Bullock
Silvestre Szilagyi

THE PHANTOM™

GHOST WHO WALKS

created by LEE FALK

For those who came in late...

NEARLY 500 YEARS AGO ON A REMOTE BANGALLAN BEACH, ONLY ONE SURVIVED A VICIOUS PIRATE ATTACK.
THE FIRST PHANTOM SWORE A SACRED OATH ON THE SKULL OF HIS FATHER'S KILLER.
...WILL DEVOTE MY LIFE TO THE DESTRUCTION OF PIRACY, GREED, CRUELTY AND INJUSTICE!
GENERATION AFTER GENERATION FOLLOWED, BUT TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD, HE WAS ALWAYS ONE MAN... IMMORTAL.
NOW THE 21ST PHANTOM HAUNTS THE NIGHTMARES OF EVIL MEN EVERYWHERE.

"END WAR" PART TWO OF THREE

WRITTEN BY **MIKE BULLOCK**
STORY CONSULTANT **DAVID MICHELINIE**
ART BY **SILVESTRE SZILAGYI**
COLORED BY **BOB PEDROZA**
LETTERED BY **JOSH ATTKEN**
EDITS BY **DAVID MICHELINIE**
PHANTOM GROUP EDITOR BY **MIKE BULLOCK**

COVER A BY JOE CORRONEY
COVER B BY RICK LEONARDI & TERRY AUSTIN
WITH RENATO GUERRA

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Joe Gentile - editor in chief
Dave Ulanski - art director
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SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PHANTOM CONSULTANT *ED RHOADES*

AND TO *KAREN MOY* AT KING FEATURES

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PREVIOUSLY IN THE PHANTOM: GHOST WHO WALKS
KAMIL KAZI, LEADER OF AL SHIHAB, SET HIS PLAN IN MOTION...
AND HIS PEOPLE EMBRACED IT.
PIRATES ATTACKED A CRUISE SHIP...
NOT REALIZING THEY WERE GETTING MORE THAN THEY BARGAINED FOR.
MEANWHILE, DIANA PALMER-WALKER AND HER UN ENVOY NEARED THEIR DESTINATION...
WHERE THEY WERE TO MEET DR. AXEL.
HOWEVER, AL SHIHAB HAD OTHER IDEAS...
EXPLOSIVE ONES.

UUUUAAAHHHHHH-
HELP MEEEE-
MMMMMUUUUUAAHH
OOOO- OOOO-
HEEEEELLLLLPPPP-
A-A-AKUUUAAA-

THIS IS A MOST GLORIOUS DAY, KAMIL!
SOON THE ENTIRE UNITED NATIONS SHALL HEAR OF THIS AND KNOW WE ARE COMING FOR THEM.
DO NOT EXPEND SO MUCH ENERGY ON THIS SIMPLEST OF TASKS, MU'TAZZ.
THIS IS AN EXERCISE, NOTHING MORE.
NOW IT IS TIME WE TURN OUR ATTENTION TO THOSE WHO WOULD HORDE COUNTLESS TREASURES WHILE MILLIONS STARVE RIGHT UNDER THEIR NOSES.
COME, WE MUST PUT PHASE TWO IN MOTION.
STILL, OUR GLORY SHINES THIS DAY, KAZI!
EASY, MY FRIEND. SOON ENOUGH, I WILL BE KING OF KINGS AND THE WORLD SHALL BE OUR FOOTSTOOL.

SSSH
FLLLLLLLL
RAAARR!

MRRRR

WHAT IS IT, DEVIL?

DIANA!
AXEL!

UHHHHH!

NO, GOD, PLEASE, NO!

MOMBASA
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT 2 Km
WHAT WOULD YOUR SOLDIERS SAY IF THEY SAW US IN THIS, KAZI?

THEY WOULD SEE WHAT RICHES ARE IN STORE FOR THEM IF THEY FOLLOW MY ORDERS, MU'TAZZ.
TURN UP THE TV.

MTV C12
...NO ONE HAS COME FORTH TO CLAIM RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS TRAGIC ACT OF TERRORISM.

EVERY BEGINNING HAS AN END, MY FRIEND.
INDEED.
WE NOW JOIN HALIM RYAD, AT THE SCENE.

Live
MTV C12
HALIM, WHAT CAN YOU TELL US?

Live
MTV C12
I JUST DON'T THINK THE CAMERA CAN DO JUSTICE TO THE AMOUNT OF DEVASTATION WE'RE SEEING HERE, RASHAD.
C12

MTV C12
I SAW THEM! I SAW WHO DID THIS!

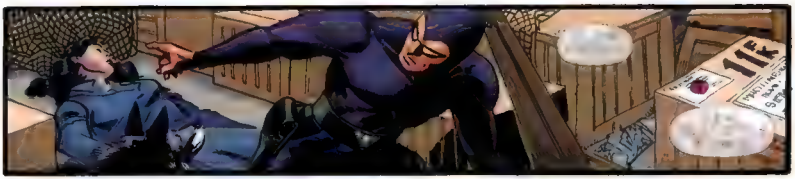
A WITNESS! RASHAD, WE HAVE A WITNESS.
12
YOUNG MAN, WHAT IS YOUR NAME?
MY NAME IS FAISAL.
FAISAL, CAN YOU REPEAT WHAT YOU JUST SAID?
I SAW EVERYTHING. THEY ARE MADMEN!
TELL US! TELL US WHAT YOU SAW!
WA-WATER. DO YOU HAVE ANY WATER?
OF COURSE, OF COURSE.
ZAID, GIVE THIS MAN SOME WATER.

NOW TELL EVERYONE WHAT YOU SAW, FAISAL.
I SAW THE CLEANSING!
"THE CLEANSING-"?
FOR AL SHIHAB!
KRAHOOM
W-W-WE'VE JUST WITNESSED A HOMICIDE ATTACK.
ONE THAT APPEARS TO HAVE TAKEN THE LIFE OF HALIM AND HIS NEWS CREW.
IT IS MY DUTY TO INFORM YOU THAT AL SHIHAB, OR THE FLAME, AS THEY'RE KNOWN IN ENGLISH SPEAKING CIRCLES, HAS JUST TAKEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ATTACKS THIS MORNING.
THUS ENDS THE EXERCISE, KAZI.

DIANA~
KRAKOOM
PING
PANG
PANG
LOOKS LIKE THE BAD GUYS AREN'T DONE YET, DEVIL.
MMMM~
DIANA~ YOU'RE ALIVE!
COME ON, BEAUTIFUL, YOU'RE GONNA MAKE IT!
HANG IN THERE, DOC!
YOU SHOULD BE SAFE IN HERE.

DIANA, CAN YOU HEAR ME?

CLINK



WITH THE AMOUNT OF EXPLOSIVES WE HAVE UNDER THE DOCKS, EVERY RESCUE WORKER IN MOMBASA WILL BE BLOWN TO ATOMS!

I CANNOT BELIEVE THIS DAY HAS ARRIVED! AFTER ALL THE YEARS SPENT PLANNING, WE ARE FINALLY CALLED TO ACTION!

INDEED. OUR GLORY SHALL LIVE FOREVER!

WE ARE NOW WRITERS OF HISTORY, MY FRIEND!
THE CLEANSING SHALL BURN INTO THE HISTORY BOOKS FOR ALL ETERNITY!

ONCE THE ORDER IS GIVEN, YOU DETONATE THE CHARGES AND I'LL MAKE SURE THE VIDEO FEED RECORDS EVERY BEAUTIFUL MOMENT OF THEIR DEATHS

GAH!

KRRRACK

WH-WH-WH-

G-G-GET BACK!

BAM

...
BY THE GRACE OF ALLAH, I'VE KILLED HIM. NOW COME ON, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
HURRY! OR ALL WILL BE UNDONE!
VRRR-BOOM
N-NO! Y-YOU'RE DEAD! I KILLED YOU!
WHUNK
NYEH!
LEGENDS NEVER DIE.

WHBAM
NO! NOOOOO!!
LET GO OF ME!
WHY?
"WHY"? WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "WHY?"
WHY THIS? WHY NOW?
WE ARE AL SHIRAD! THE WORLD MUST BE CLEANSED!
BAM
WRONG ANSWER

HERE'S ANOTHER ONE!
THERE'S A WOMAN IN HERE WHO NEEDS YOUR HELP!
THIS PLACE IS LITTERED WITH PEOPLE WHO NEED OUR HELP. WE'LL GET TO HER AS SOON AS-
NOW!
OKAY, OKAY.
THIS ONE DIDN'T MAKE IT EITHER.
MMRRRR-
A-AXEL-
WHERE'S AXEL?
HE'S GONE, DIANA
NNNN-NO, LORD, NO-
I HAVE TO GO DEVIL. MAKE SURE SHE GET'S HOME SAFE
AIRPOR
THE FOURTH PROTOCOL HAS FAILED, KAZI
AL JAZRA'S LIVE BROADCAST OF THE THIRD ONE WILL HAVE IMPACT ENOUGH. MU'TAZZ

DOWNTOWN MOMBASA. ONE HOUR LATER.
HOW LONG WILL ALL THIS TAKE, CHANE?
THIS SHOULD BE EASY.
THESE MIDDLE EASTERN TERRORISTS NEVER STOP TO CONSIDER WEB SECURITY. ALWAYS TOO BUSY GOING ON ABOUT 'HOLY WAR THIS' AND 'INFIDEL THAT.'
OKAY, WE'RE UP AND RUNNING.
NOW, LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN FIND ON 'AL SHUHAB' FOR YOU.
I SEE THE NEW COSTUME DID THE TRICK. NOTHING LIKE KEVLAR SOAKED IN KALANCHOE TOMENTOSA ROOT TO MAKE YOU APPEAR BULLETPROOF.
ARE YOU SURE MY GRANDFATHER WON'T FIND OUT THAT I'M HELPING YOU?
MOZZ WILL NEVER KNOW. I PROMISE.

HE'S SO TRADITIONAL. I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY HE WON'T EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY. IT'S JUST SILLY TO BE STUCK IN THE 1930S
I MEAN, AT LEAST BUY A LAPTOP. HE HAS SO MUCH STORED UP IN THAT OLD HEAD OF HIS. WHY NOT ARCHIVE IT?
HE COULD DO SO MUCH FOR HUMANITY IF HE JUST-
WAIT A MINUTE. I THINK I GOT SOMETHING
YEAH- THIS MIGHT BE IT
SUSPECTED
THERE'S YOUR GUY.
BETTER KNOWN AS "KAMIKAZE" IN CERTAIN CIRCLES.
YEAH... THAT'S DEFINITELY HIM
OKAY. WE NEED MORE. WHAT ELSE CAN YOU TELL ME?

DON'T TOUCH IT! THE OILS IN YOUR FINGERS DEGRADE THE SCREEN MATERIAL.

MU'TAZZ ABBAS- KAZI'S RIGHT HAND MAN. SOMALIAN. ABBAS HAS LITERALLY GROWN UP IN WAR.
HIS FATHER WAS MUJAHIDEEN. AFTER LEAVING AFGHANISTAN, HE WAS INVOLVED IN WARS FROM ONE END OF AFRICA TO THE OTHER.
MU'TAZZ HAS SURVIVED BATTLES IN MOGADISHU, RWANDA, IRAQ AND WAS BRIEFLY A MEMBER OF IDI'S ARMY IN UGANDA BEFORE BEING RECRUITED BY KAZI

WHAT ELSE? WHERE IS HE NOW?
NOT SURE.
SAYS HERE A LARGE SUM OF MONEY FROM ONE OF MU'TAZZ'S BANK ACCOUNTS WAS JUST TRANSFERRED TO A KNOWN ARMS DEALER.

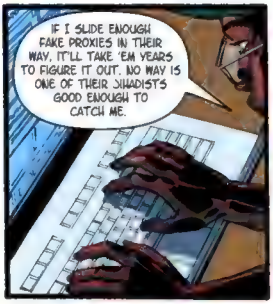
WHAT ABOUT THE ARMS DEALER? WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT HIM?
HE RECENTLY BROKERED A DEAL FOR A SMALL BIO-WARHEAD ONE OF HIS PEOPLE STOLE FROM OSSETIA.

DANG! SAYS HERE, THE DEVICE WILL INFECT EVERY LIVING THING WITHIN ONE HUNDRED SQUARE MILES OF IT'S DETONATION.
IMMEDIATELY AFTER INFECTION, PAINFUL SORES DEVELOP ON THE FLESH. THEN SEIZURES SET IN FOR SEVERAL HOURS, ENDING IN CARDIAC ARREST
MAN, THAT'S SOME NASTY STUFF!

AND WHERE IS IT NOW?
AL SHIHAB APPEARS TO HAVE IT, BUT THERE'S NO SIGN OF ANY DELIVERY SYSTEM

THERE'S SOMEONE ACCESSING THAT BANK ACCOUNT, RIGHT NOW.
KEEP HIM ON. I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN PULL FROM HIS DRIVE.
YOU CAN DO THAT?
IF I CAN GET THROUGH A TRUSTED PROXY, I CAN HACK INTO HIS MACHINE PRETTY QUICKLY
"PROXY?"
DON'T WORRY. BY THE TIME THEY FIGURE OUT I'M IN, WE'LL HAVE EVERYTHING WE NEED AND THEN IT'LL TAKE 'EM WEEKS TO FIGURE OUT WHERE I CAME FROM
THEY HAVE A DELIVERY SYSTEM IN MIND. SO THIS WON'T BE UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL
LOOKS IRANIAN. JUDGING FROM THE OUTDATED NAV-BOARD
OH NO ACCORDING TO THIS, AL SHIHAB IS TAKING DELIVERY TOMORROW.

THEY'RE TRYING TO BACK-HACK YOU. AND IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE ROLLING IT!


IF I SLIDE ENOUGH FAKE PROXIES IN THEIR WAY, IT'LL TAKE 'EM YEARS TO FIGURE IT OUT. NO WAY IS ONE OF THEIR JIHADISTS GOOD ENOUGH TO CATCH ME.

THE ONE CALLED "CHANE"? HE WAS ON OUR LIST, BUT WE CHOSE YOU INSTEAD.
YOU CHOSE WELL.

OH NO. IT'S HOSHI!

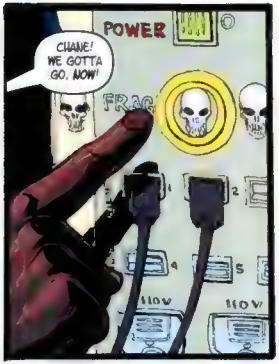
NO WAY! HOSHI WOULD NEVER WORK WITH TERRORISTS. HE'S THINKS HE'S TOO GOOD FOR THAT.
I'M TELLING YOU, IT'S HOSHI. LOOK AT THAT CODE! ONLY HOSHI CAN RIFF LIKE THAT

MAYBE IT'S TIME FOR ME TO GET OUT OF THE 1930S, TOO. WHO'S HOSHI?

ONLY THE BEST HACKER ALIVE! HE AND CHANE HAVE BEEN GOING AT IT FOR YEARS NOW
GIVE IT, CHANE. WE GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE, NOW!

NO WAY! EVEN IF IT IS HOSHI, THEY'D NEVER BE ABLE TO GET HERE THAT FAST.

YOU'RE NUTS, CHANE! WE HAVE TO FRAG THIS STUFF AND GET OUT OF HERE
CHANCES ARE WE ONLY HAVE A FEW MINUTES


POWER
CHANE! WE GOTTA GO, NOW!
FRAG
110V
110V

WAIT! LOOK AT THIS!

OH NO, YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!

IF THAT'S THE TARGET, WE'LL HAVE WORLD WAR THREE ON OUR HANDS!
THE VATICAN? THE POPE? ARE YOU KIDDING ME?
BA-WHAM
BRRRP BRRRP
BRRRP BRRRP
BRRRRRRP
BRRRP BRRRP
BLAM
AAAAH!
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
To Be Continued...

BEHIND THE MASK

By Ed Rhoades

The Timeless Journey of the Hero

Archetypes. Carl Jung talked about them. He noted that there were symbolic images from the collective unconscious that pervade the fabric of disjointed societies. Joseph Campbell described the mythological proportions of the hero as a man who begins in an ordinary world, and receives a call to embark upon a great and arduous journey. Throughout the course of his road of trials, the hero makes ultimate sacrifices and faces severe challenges.

Such a concept is inspirational, and literature is replete with examples. Lee Falk was immersed in his love of literature. He especially relished mythical stories and legends including The Odyssey, and King Arthur. He readily confessed that his work was derivative of these timeless stories, but his interpretation and application of such themes into the realm of comic strips was something special.

Lee Falk's classic hero embarks on a journey that was in many ways unique in its time, but influential for future comics. It's no secret that the Batcave was inspired by the skull cave, and Batman devoted himself to fighting crime after seeing the death of his parents. He also used fear as a tool in defeating his adversaries...circumstances similar to those of the Phantom who came years before. Both heroes possess untold wealth, physical prowess, and skintight costumes with a mask and cowl. There's no doubt the Phantom was the template for costumed heroes and superheroes to follow.

The Phantom is the embodiment of the classic hero Joseph Campbell spoke of in his works. He sacrifices his life for a greater good. It was Andre LeBlanc, assistant to Sy Barry on The Phantom and Flash Gordon, who familiarized me with the life work of Joseph Campbell. Andre was among other things, an accomplished musician, writer, and an expert on comparative theology and the illustrator of the Picture Bible. Andre understood the impact of the hero on culture as well as everyday life.

The Phantom is also a contradiction in terms. He is an ethical vigilante and an immortal figure who faces death time and again. He wears a mask and a costume, but one that defines rather than hides his identity. With fists of iron and the mark of a skull, he fights for peace in the jungle. He is known for his kindness and compassion. Billy Zane referred to him as a character who was not super human ...but super humane.

What exactly is it about The Phantom that is so enduring that it captures interest of millions after more than seven decades? It is the story of a human quest and the struggle to fight injustice. The Phantom's morality or self doubt is never an issue, but his mortality and willingness to do what is right because of and in spite of the law are appealing to the vicarious need for justice in the eyes of readers on a global level. We would all like to think there is a bit of the Phantom in each of us.

White Knight

Mike Bullock

"How could you help them, if they're all dead?" The soothing tones of Dr. Eichmann's voice belied the intense stare burning into Jaime Salamy's flesh. He looked at her as one might gaze at a lab experiment that failed to yield the desired results. His voice echoed ever so imperceptibly in his modest, sterile office. Several certificates hung on the walls, while the only door in the room had the words: "Head of Psychiatric Evaluations, Saint Elizabeth's" displayed on the beveled glass.

"Okay, let's start over from the beginning. Tell me again why a woman of your upbringing would join the Peace Corps, Ms. Salamy." The Doctor laid a file on his desk marked "Pre-Trial Examination", before sitting down in his brown leather armchair.

"What does my "upbringing" have to do with this?" the annoyance with his questions began to color Jaime's tone in shades of anger as she fidgeted with the tight curls of her auburn hair, trying unsuccessfully to keep it out of her piercing brown eyes.

The soft edge of his voice momentarily gave way to reveal the seriousness of his concerns, "I'm merely seeking a foundation for your actions, nothing more."

"Try *self-preservation*." She spat her answer at him as if her thin mouth had suddenly filled with poison.

"Please answer the question," he replied, unfazed by her growing agitation.

"I joined for the same reason any one else joins: *I wanted to help people*!" Jaime was shocked to find herself nearly yelling the response at him, a shock that evidenced itself as she leaned back sharply as if she was recoiling from her own anger. Jaime quickly raised her hands to cover her tear stained face as she leaned forward on the couch. Her shoulders tightened as she began to rock back and forth, clearly agitated by the Doctor's invasive queries.

"Then, I'll repeat my question: How could you help them, if they're all dead?"

The nearly tangible impact of his words struck Jaime like a bolt of verbal lightning. She dropped her hands and started upright; her face contorted in pain as the memories came flooding back to her.

White Knight

"Look! I know what I saw!" She blurted out. "It doesn't surprise me that you think I'm crazy. Hell, *I* thought I was crazy when it happened."

"No one thinks you're crazy, Ms. Salamy," the Doctor's words came back as bereft of emotion as if they were uttered by a machine. "We just need to know the truth."

"I TOLD YOU THE TRUTH!"

"Tell me again."

"I went there to help the Jumballa tribe, to teach their children to read and help the elders in their dealings with the larger tribes." As she began to retell her story, the memories of the Jumballa children washed over her, easing some of the tension from her rigid form. She leaned back on the couch, dropped her arms into her lap and began rubbing at some imagined bit of dirt on her right hand.

"Their children were so innocent, not like the kids here. They didn't demand toys or act out for attention. They simply wanted to help their family get along." A smile broke out on the corner of her mouth, quickly washing some of the anger from her face. "I was amazed at how well behaved they were. Some 'civilized' people think they're savages, but at the end of the day, those people were more gentle and kind-hearted than any one group of people I've ever met in a first world nation."

Jaime paused before continuing, her voice nearly cracking. "Th-this made their predicament all the more heart-breaking. Th-the children were slowly starving to death. An-and they didn't care. They just wanted to *live their lives*."

She broke off for a moment to lift her right hand up and wipe a stillborn tear from her eye. Her bottom lip quivered slightly as she went on.

"At first I couldn't understand. Why were they starving? Where was all the humanitarian aid sent over by the UN? I had to know what was happening to their food and supplies," she said, as the veil of anger once again began creeping down her face.

"If everyone here only knew where all their money goes. Too many people think all they have to do is sign a check every month and send it off. But the truth is the majority of the money we send to sponsor those children, the lion's share of the food, clothing and medicine shipped over there to keep poverty at bay never makes it to the impoverished."

The Doctor raised his pen from his notepad briefly and placed it against his temple as a quizzical look shrouded his eyes.

"Where does it go then, Ms. Salamy, if not to those in need?"

"The Warlords, they take it all," her angry tone returned as her eyes tightened and her face constricted in hatred.

"They take everything long before it gets to those poor souls we think we're saving. Sure, every once in awhile something will make its way through to the poor, or whenever a group of sponsors go over for a visit airs will be put on to hide the truth from the outside world. But, when you're there for any length of time, they can't hide it from you."

"I'd been there nearly four months when I caught my first glimpse of him."

"Him, who?" inquired the Doctor, as if he were clarifying a food order with an inattentive waitress.

"General Zamuli. I told you about him before."

"According to our records, the man you refer to as "General Zamuli", is in fact, one Ackbar Antoli, the UN commander in charge of that region, Ms. Salamy," while the Doctor's voice carried no inflection of accusation, his eyes spoke volumes.

"Believe his lies all you want!" This sudden outburst from Jaime quickly brought Dr. Eichmann's pen back to the notepad, where he scrawled furiously for a moment before asking her to continue.

"And when was it you concluded that this "General Zamuli" was in fact leading a double life, Ms. Salamy?"

"It was three weeks ago, today. Gullian, one of the village elders, began avoiding me after I'd

questioned him numerous times regarding the food shortages. This unwarranted behavior made me suspicious. So, I started paying closer attention to him. After three days, I realized that every night, as the rest of the village lay down to sleep, he would disappear into the rainforest and return two to three hours later."

"Another thing I noticed was that of all the elders, only Gullian seemed to be well fed," her speech slowed a bit to allow this last bit of evidence to sink in.

"On the fourth night, I slipped out of my hut and followed him into the forest. It seemed like we walked forever, but after looking at my watch, I decided we'd gone approximately four or five kilometers, when I noticed a light up ahead."

"As we drew closer, I could see the light came from torches around an encampment. It was a military encampment. They had jeeps, Hum-Vees and enough guns to kill off the entire country."

"Gullian walked right in like he owned the place and marched over to a central tent, where a man in UN dress walked out and greeted him."

"This was Ackbar Antoli, oh excuse me, *General Zamuli*, I presume?" While Dr. Eichmann's facial expressions feigned a subdued apathy, his eyes and ears devoured every word and non-verbal tidbit of information provided by Jaime.

"You tell me," she replied, sarcasm dripping from her words like some bitter syrup. "All I know is he was the leader of that militant group. I don't care how white his uniform was, his eyes and expression were certainly those of man who doesn't care about the children he's killing by starvation, or the mothers and fathers who have to mourn their babies."

"You seem to want to vilify him at every turn, Ms. Salamy. Why do you think that is?"

"Because *HE'S A VILLIAN*!" Jaime startled herself with the ferocity of her response. She looked around, as if embarrassed that someone else might have witnessed her outburst, and then sat back down on the couch, noticeably shaken.

"I see…" The Dr.'s response did nothing to soothe her frazzled nerves. "And what brings you to that conclusion?'

"Actions speak louder than words and his words were so damning I'm surprised God didn't open the heavens and strike him down where he stood..." Jaime paused for a moment before continuing. "Mixed in with all the crates full of guns, bazookas, grenades and bullets were cases and cases of food marked 'UN Humanitarian Aid'. He had one of his hired thugs break open one of those cases and he and Gullian sat and feasted on some sort of meat for what seemed like hours before the General turned to Gullian and told him he wanted more from the Jumballa."

"Gullian asked what more there was to give, explained that his people wore rags, lived in mud huts and each family had to make it through the day with what little food he brought them from 'Zamuli's overwhelming generosity'," Jaime's penchant for sarcasm returned with those final words.

"What was it he asked of Gullian?"

The strain of what she was remembering tapped a well of tears in Jaime's eyes. "He told Gullian of another Warlord, one in Uganda who was building himself an empire on the backs of slaves. Slaves he'd abducted as children and indoctrinated into his 'new world order'."

"He told Gullian he wanted their kids, he wanted them for slaves he could train to be fanatical fighters for his cause. He wanted to build his own army on the backs of innocent children, just like the other Warlord was doing. At that moment, I found myself coming out from behind my hiding place and marching right up to the General to give him a piece of my mind!" The smoldering anger in Jaime's eyes left no room for the sarcasm to remain, but it was quickly replaced by a look of horror welling up from memories any sane mind would seek to repress.

"In hindsight, I'm lucky that this wasn't the last thing I ever did. The General's men had guns pointed at my head as soon as they noticed me. It was a blur. It all happened so fast," her voice began trembling from the strain of her recollections. "I-I had no more than stood up and started towards him when I

found myself trying to escape their rough hands as they dragged me across the camp by my hair and threw me to the ground at his feet."

"As I lay there in the dirt, realizing I should have listened to my Father when he told me not to get involved, Zamuli debated over whether or not to make me his concubine, allow his men to 'take their passions out on me' or have me killed on the spot. Gullian quickly told him who I was and begged the General to rid the forest of me."

"I'll never forget that moment," her irises went wide as her voice dropped to nearly inaudible levels and she continued in a hushed whisper of someone whose mind cannot grasp the enormity of one's own memories.

"I looked up at the General and everything seemed to go into slow motion. He drew his pistol and pointed it right at my head. I thought for sure that was the last thing I'd ever see," with this last part, her voice dropped to an almost inaudible whisper.

"And then what happened?" Dr. Eichmann's voice seemed to have no respect for the hushed tones of Jaime's words, smashing through them like a bulldozer through a mud hut.

"That's when I saw him."

"Him who?"

"The Phantom . . ." Jaime's voice trailed off into nothingness as her breath reacted to the whirlwind of memories that played in her mind's theater.

"Your imagined hero? The masked man riding through the jungle on a white horse, come to save you from the evil 'villain'?" The doctor could have been talking about tongue depressors for all the emotion he allowed his voice to convey.

"He's not imagined. He's a jungle legend and a hero to those people… He's a hero to *all* people," the reverence in Jaime's tone would have been surprising to anyone witnessing this conversation. She spoke of this hero as if he were God himself.

"And what exactly did your 'White Knight' do when you first saw him? Shall we assume he saved the Damsel in Distress (you) and put an end to this upstart empire you've told me about?" Although trying to remain as clinical and detached as one in his line of work should be, the Doctor's skepticism was finally beginning to cloud his words like a monsoon rolling over a clear sky. The Prosecutor had told Dr. Eichman what a monster Jaime was, but he was beginning to draw his own conclusion: she suffered from paranoid delusions.

"He wasn't a 'White Knight;" he wore purple. But his horse was white, and one of the most magnificent animals I've ever seen," the roller coaster of Jaime's emotions now ran from amazement to outright awe as she spoke of her hero and his horse.

"Purple? He wore purple in the jungle? Quite a bold fashion statement, wouldn't you say?" The Doctor caught himself as his voice began sliding from skeptical to contemptuous. Recovering his composure in an instant, he asked her to continue.

"He burst through the wall of underbrush behind the General and by the time his men sounded a warning, he'd already ridden past, knocked the General to the ground with a well-placed kick and scooped me up before darting back into the forest near my original hiding place." Her nostrils flared as her knuckles turned white from the force of her grip on the couch cushion she was sitting on.

TO BE CONTINUED!

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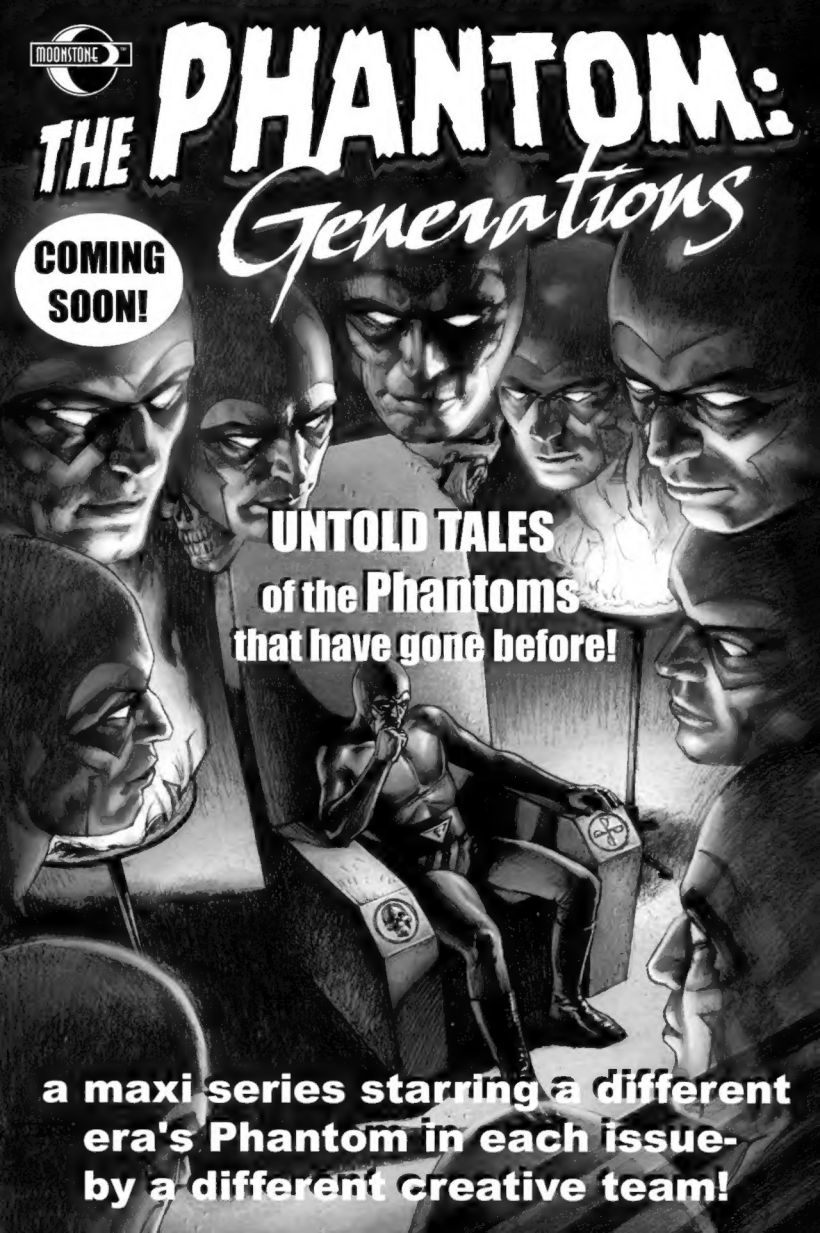
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